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Army Cutworm – Economic Thresholds and Control*

Weather is known to have a dramatic impact of on cutworm populations, as well as many other pests. Dry weather favors cutworm population whereas wet weather can reduce cutworm population by causing mortality of the small larvae. There seems to be a lot of army cutworm activity right now in small grains and alfalfa. Army Cutworm larvae are nearly two inches long when fully grown, generally colored light gray with lighter markings and pale stripes running down the back. Larvae feed on above ground plant parts so feeding damage can be determined by examining plants. They avoid sunlight so they will be hard to find on sunny days when they will stay in soil, but on cloudy days you may be able to spot them on plants. Damage is often found only in spots in fields and sometimes is more common in drier areas of the field. Infestations can also be field wide. Feeding causes small holes in grain leaves and may cause foliage to turn white. In alfalfa newly seeded fields are most susceptible to cutworm damage. Cutworms may cut the alfalfa plants off at the soil surface. Plants fed on by army cutworms can recover if the army cutworm population is treated to prevent continued depletion of plant reserves.

The economic threshold for control of both army and pale western cutworms is when larval cutworms counts exceed 4-5 cutworms per square foot in cereal crops, 3-4 / ft² in mature alfalfa stands, and 2 / ft² in new alfalfa stands.

WHEAT

Control product options for army cutworm control in wheat include: Mustang 1.9-4.3 oz/ac (14 day preharvest interval), Warrior 2.56-3.84 oz/ac (30 days to grain), Sevin 1-1.5 lb ai/ac, Lannate LV 12-24 oz/ac (7 days preharvest grain, 10 days graze), PennCap-M, and Tracer. Refer to product label for detailed information.

BARLEY

Control product options for army cutworm control in barley include: Warrior with Zeon Technology 1.92-2.56 oz/ac. Warrior received a Section 18 emergency exemption to control cutworms, Russian wheat aphid, and cereal leaf beetle on barley in Montana. The current exemption is good through July 30, 2004. Other products labeled for cutworms in barley include: Lannate, PennCap, and Tracer.

ALFALFA

Control options in alfalfa include: Mustang 2.4-4.3 oz/ac, Warrior 1.28-1.92 oz/ac, Baythroid, Fury, Lorsban, Methyl parathion, Permethrin, and Sevin. Refer to product label for preharvest interval, rates, and remarks.

*Compiled by: Paul V. Dixon, former Yellowstone County Extension Agricultural Agent